

On Strategic Nonviolence

Part I: "Peace" or Social Revolution--Which Way the Greens?

by Gary Sisco

When Murray Bookchin opened the debate between social ecology and "deep ecology," the Green movement in this country entered a long-overdue process of political and philosophical self-definition. Ecology ceased to be a mere bumpersticker slogan. "Cheap unity" was abandoned for political debate and argument, which can only lend the Green movement a greater philosophical coherence and understanding of the social roots of the ecological crisis.(1)

In this first of a series of articles, I hope to open debate on another question crucial to this process: Will the Greens adopt a dogmatic pacifist line on the question of nonviolence? Or will they embrace strategic nonviolence, forthrightly upholding people's natural right to armed self-defense of their liberty? I would like to argue for the latter, focusing more on matters of broad principle and on the social roots of violence and power than on the specifics of strategy and organizational forms.

Let us begin by acknowledging that no consensus exists within the movement on these questions, and by acknowledging also that the Left Green position in favor of strategic nonviolence is a minority one, not only within the Greens but within the wider movements for peace and social justice as well. Let us also dispense from the start with the almost religious aura surrounding the question of nonviolence in American activist movements today. If we agree with Bookchin that the word *ecology* "is no magic term that unlocks the real secret of our abuse of nature," let us also agree that the word *nonviolence* is no magic term that unlocks the secret of people's abuse of one another.

Movements for social change need to address the question of nonviolence from a political perspective: What are the social roots of violence? What can be done by social movements to minimize, if not eliminate, the use of violence as a means of resolving political conflict? Does the pacifist position always, in all circumstances, command the "moral highground"?

Or are there times when taking up arms in defense of freedom and justice is not only "justified" but commendable on highly ethical grounds?

These are only some of the questions Greens need to address in a serious, principled manner, and I would argue that Gandhian dogma is no help to us here. If the word *ecology*, as Bookchin has made clear, "can be as easily abused, distorted, and tainted as words like 'democracy' and 'freedom,'" so too can the concept of nonviolence be abused by shifting people's focus from the *institutional* roots of violence in a hierarchical society to questions of individual belief and morality. It can also be abused when reasoned debate gives way to a self-righteous moralism on the part of people whose social position serves to effectively shield them from any real threat of violent oppression by the state.

It is my hope that opening debate on this more-or-less closed question will help clarify certain important differences between recognizing the right of individuals, social movements, and peoples to armed self-defense on the one hand, and the use of offensive political violence *à la* the Red Army Faction and other terrorist sects of both the left and the right on the other. I hasten to add, however, that a definitive clarification of these differences would require a full volume and will not be attempted here, where my intention is to provoke a much broader, freewheeling discussion of nonviolence and how it will be defined by the Greens.

Questions and Contradictions

Many pacifists automatically translate the rejection of absolute nonviolence by individual activists and organized groups into support for political violence and traditional notions of an armed struggle waged by a "vanguard" party or minority faction. But are these questions so starkly drawn that a movement's moral and strategic options are limited to the extremes of pacifism on the one side and terrorism on the other?

I would argue that in the real world choices like

these rarely present themselves to movements struggling for fundamental institutional change, that is, to movements that have abandoned strictly moral symbolism for direct confrontation with the state and social revolution. The issue of nonviolence must be viewed in a more nuanced light than is normally the case, if the moral questions raised by advocates of nonviolence are to be considered relevant in the context of the existent realities of power.

The Left Green program calls for nonviolent social revolution. It calls for a commitment to strategic nonviolence as a fundamental principle and for the use of creative, militant forms of direct action to defend, advance, and, indeed, embody the movement's goals and principles. It does not call for armed struggle in the traditional sense, much less for the creation of an armed "vanguard," minority or otherwise. The program does, however, affirm the right of people to bear arms in defense of their liberty—a natural right established by the American Revolution more than two centuries ago—declaring that "the right of self-defense against violent attacks is not the same as a traditional strategy of armed struggle."⁽²⁾

In short, Left Greens draw a distinction between the armed defense of long-established rights and the freedoms gained through political struggle on the one hand, and the offensive use of arms as a means of dictating political change through military or paramilitary force on the other. The German Greens recognize the same distinction in their Federal Program: "The principle of nonviolence does not restrict the fundamental rights of self-defense and includes social resistance in its various forms."⁽³⁾

By recognizing the right of self-defense, both programs simultaneously reject the pacifist position and reveal the lack of consensus within the Greens on the definition of nonviolence. Neither program successfully resolves the tension between the pacifist and nonpacifist camps; at best, they reflect temporary compromises between conflicting tendencies that have agreed to ignore real differences in the interest of short-term political expediency.

The question is whether this decision to avoid political conflict in the short term will prove to be a wise one in the long. Conventional wisdom would have it that consensus is always best, even if the consensus reflects nothing more than a compromise that resolves nothing and in fact incorporates serious philosophical conflicts into the movement's program as a matter of

policy. I would argue that this all-too-common effort to find consensus for its own sake is a mistake. Questions as basic and potentially life-threatening as whether or not Greens will defend themselves from violence should be argued now and not later. There are tough times ahead politically, economically, and ecologically as the American powers-that-be continue their head-long "drift" to the right; and I, for one, would like to know which way my allies or potential allies intend to jump when (and if) this "drift" is met by serious resistance, and the resistance by the inevitable reaction.

These are not idle questions for academic discussion and speculation. To transform the present society into a free and ecological society will require a social revolution so thoroughgoing as to be without precedent. There are only two alternatives to this social revolution: the rise of what Bookchin has rightfully named "ecofascism" and an ecological catastrophe that promises to be every bit as devastating to life itself as thermonuclear immolation. Intimately bound up with the ecological issues facing this society are a number of hard, practical questions that the Green movement has yet to address, not the least of which is the inextricable link between militarism and the ecological crisis, neither of which is going to disappear simply because individual people decide to be nicer to each other and to "walk softly on the planet."

If we are going to talk about violence and nonviolence, let us at least avoid the system's perverse logic by openly naming the real source of violence in the world today. Is Leonard Peltier to be left to rot for life in prison by a movement unprepared to name the real terrorists in this society? Are there really North Americans prepared to deliver sermons on the evils of "violence" to the men, women, and children who have chosen the rifle in El Salvador? Does such arrogance exist that would condemn the "terrorism" of the Irish Republican Army in the face of eight centuries of relentless British domination and racism? The answer, sadly, is yes, but the more important question is whether such arrogance will go unchallenged by the Greens.

Let's call things by their true names and get down to the question at hand. The United States government and its corporate partners constitute a primary source of violence in the form of imperialism, ecocide, counterinsurgency warfare, and outright terrorism in large parts of the world. This structural reality of power not only increases the responsibility of American social movements to defend people's right to self-determina-

tion and freedom from superpower domination in its numerous forms. It also greatly increases the importance of answering questions of praxis in a rational manner based on the lessons of historical experience and the concrete realities of power in an era of highly centralized, militaristic nation-states, equipped with armamentoria and surveillance technologies without historical precedent.

Given the realities of world power and the entrenched forces of the centralized state, activist movements must struggle to free themselves, to the extent possible, of contradictions in theory and praxis. Yet the movements for peace and social justice are riddled with contradictions, thanks in no small measure to an equally entrenched dogma of "personal responsibility" that often reduces the structural problem of institutional violence to matters of individual morality.

In the case of national liberation struggles, for example, many pacifists enter into contradictions by insisting that they support the political gains of popular movements and the right of Third World peoples to self-determination, but not the recourse to arms that made these gains possible in the first place and without which the right of self-determination would be an abstract right at best.

Many nonpacifist radicals, on the other hand, enter into further, some would say racist, contradictions by affirming the right of armed struggle by oppressed peoples in the Third World, while insisting on an absolute commitment to nonviolence in the United States and other "advanced" countries, as if the right of self-determination here were somehow guaranteed or any less abstract in the absence of a social movement prepared to defend itself and its liberties, with arms if need be. This international division of rights (to coin a term) is highly questionable, in my view, and the arguments advanced in support of this position rarely evade their own hypocrisy.

For reasons of space, a detailed examination of these and other common contradictions in activist theory will not be attempted here. In any case, they have been explored elsewhere by principled radicals concerned with the making of fundamental change in the United States—notably, by Ward Churchill in a provocative essay, "Pacifism as Pathology."⁽⁴⁾

What is important is to understand that the question of absolute nonviolence versus strategic nonviolence and the present contradictions surrounding this question are not matters of "abstract theory" to be

endlessly discussed by "armchair intellectuals." The way we choose to answer these "theoretical" questions raises eminently practical issues for activists committed to a long-term struggle for radical change and the making of a free, ecological society. For examples: Where should political power reside in a democratic society? How is that power to be controlled from below, as it must be if the word *democracy* is to have any meaning? How are the political gains achieved by popular movements, here or elsewhere, to be successfully defended against the inevitable, normally armed, forces of reaction, without the movements' resorting to authoritarian, militaristic forms and methods of defense?

If we follow this line of questioning to its conclusion, a still larger issue emerges regarding the relationship of the Green movement to the nation-state itself. This question, though crucial to the movement's development, has largely been sidestepped by the Greens, not only in the United States but in West Germany as well, where it lies at the crux of the growing left-right split in *Die Grünen*. It is within this larger context that any coherent discussion of nonviolence must take place.

"Peace" or Social Revolution?

Most of the present contradictions in theory and praxis are resolved once the natural right of self-defense is recognized, along with the right of individuals to make the personal choice of whether or not to take up arms should the situation arise, and to act on their choice in accordance with the dictates of conscience. So long as these choices are recognized as strictly voluntary matters freely determined by the individual, issues of coercion and authoritarianism need not arise.

The issues raised by the question of nonviolence and the right of self-defense are too complex to lend themselves to pacifist dogma and universal declarations of right and wrong, where nonviolence is understood to be right in all circumstances and violence wrong, including "violence" used in simple self-defense against physical attack and political repression. Once we consider the interconnections among ecology, economy, media, politics, and military means of repression of the present world system, it becomes clear that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Violence is now institutionalized on a world scale. Federal taxes levied in Vermont pay for air raids on peasant villages in El Salvador. Food prices

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established and manipulated by speculators in First World “commodity markets” determine who eats and who starves in the Third World.(5)

Hence the question of nonviolence becomes more than a matter of personal pacifism or “world peace.” Should “peace” somehow break out, or more likely be imposed on a fractious Third World (or for that matter on potentially fractious regions of the United States like the “underclass” ghettos of the inner cities) without first addressing the structural injustice built into the social order of individual countries like El Salvador—and more important, of the present world system—such a peace would resemble “the peace of the tomb” more than any cause for celebration among thoughtful people of conscience.

Peace is not always a high priority on the agenda of social movements waging revolutionary struggles. Nor are social peace and “stability” necessarily desirable in and of themselves. Nicaragua under the Somoza dynasty, for example, was a very “peaceful” place for long periods of time, internationally famous for its “stability.” So, too, were many other places, like South Africa, Vietnam under French colonial rule, Mississippi before the rise of the civil rights movement, Guatemala for several hundred years, Armenia until recent times, the Philippines, and the West Bank. There exists a nearly guaranteed “peace” and “stability” in authoritarian states like Syria, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Romania, and others too numerous to list here. The streets of Paraguay are exceedingly peaceful. Siberia is perhaps the most peaceful place in the world.

If the Greens are to help build an American peace movement worthy of the name, they must first recognize that “fundamental social change, not only personal commitments to nonviolence, is needed to remove institutionalized violence in the world”(6), and that social movements whose goal is institutional change cannot help but enter into prolonged confrontations with the established powers and, if successful, with reaction and counterrevolution.

Serious activists need to remember that violence, or the threat of violence, is not a primary form of domination but rather a means of *enforcing* domination, whether we speak of the domination of women by men, young by old, race by race, class by class, nation by nation, or whatever you like. This being the case, it goes without saying that when the dominating powers and institutions feel their authority threatened in any

significant way, they employ their methods of enforcement in order to retain their power and privilege and to conserve the “stability” of the status quo. To assume otherwise is to fly in the face of history.

If we are to speak of “eliminating violence” from the world, as is so often done, we must focus the brunt of our attention not only on the immediate, obvious manifestations of social domination (i.e., acts of physical violence, however terrible). More important, we must focus on hierarchy itself, where we find the root of social domination as well as the *form* taken by domination in its myriad manifestations.(7)

Hierarchy, Power, and Violence

Social ecology is first and foremost a philosophy of human freedom, an anti-authoritarian nature philosophy. Its purpose is to study nature, conceived as natural evolution, as the potential ground of freedom and through this study to establish the foundations for an ecological ethics and a politics of total liberation. Its goal is the conscious entry of human beings into the making of their own history and the process of natural evolution.

That is to say, the political goal of social ecology is the creation of a society of free but interdependent individuals and communities who consciously perceive themselves and their interactions with each other and with the biotic world as an as-yet-unfulfilled expression of natural evolution’s long striving toward consciousness. Its goal is the creation not simply of a society that perceives itself as a “part of nature,” as contemporary cliché would have it, but a society that understands itself to be nature become conscious of itself and therefore able to consciously *intervene* not only in social evolution as such but in the ages-long process of natural evolution itself. Such a society would be, in effect, the culmination of one aspect of natural evolution—the actualization of the consciousness immanent in nature—and the beginning of another: the unfolding dialectic of self-determined evolution.

This study of natural evolution as the history of nature’s striving for consciousness has led social ecologists to conclude, with Bookchin, that there is no hierarchy in nature. The hierarchical relationship existent between society and nature is a reflection, a projection or transference, if you will, of highly successful attempts on the part of some human beings to dominate others. Hierarchy is the institutionalized, organiza-

tional form taken by social domination as well as a means of ensuring its continuance, and violence is its method of enforcement.

Hence the ecological crisis is in every sense a social crisis. Not only is hierarchy projected onto nature as a rationale to justify its prior existence in society; hierarchical social relationships are mirrored in the present disastrous relationship of society to nature. If the ecological crisis is to be resolved in any way desirable by human standards, the social crises from which it stems must first be resolved through the actions of a social movement that is not only democratic but consciously anti-hierarchical.

These conclusions necessarily bring social ecologists into direct opposition with the nation-state, a highly advanced institution which embodies the entire logic of social hierarchy. The state's *raison d'être* is to enforce, through its self-granted "legal" monopoly of the use of violence, the various forms of social, cultural, political, and to an ever-increasing extent, economic domination of the many by the powerful elites that the state both serves and helps to create in both capitalist and state-"socialist" societies.

It is for this reason that social ecology has been called, not incorrectly, a form of "eco-anarchism." In essence, it is a nature philosophy leading to the development of an objective ecological ethics that affirms the anarchist's subjective moral opposition to the state as an institution founded on and by violence, and to hierarchy as such. Social ecology thus represents a major advance in anarchist theory. What was once a political and moral creed has, through Bookchin's development of social ecology, been buttressed with a philosophical base.

The Green "pillar" of participatory democracy, not to mention the very idea of decentralization, remains an illusion, at best a bumpersticker slogan, if we do not come to grips with the nation-state as a centralized politico-military institution whose power and "legitimacy" ultimately rest on its self-granted monopoly of violence, and its willingness to use armed force in defense of its power and the maintenance of the social status quo. To equate the Green principle of nonviolence with pacifism is to recognize, even fortify, the "legitimacy" of the state by removing the ultimate guarantee of freedom embodied in the natural right of citizens to bear arms, not only for personal protection, but more important, to defend their political liberties in the face of centralized power.

Indeed, the fact that this natural right was appended to the federal Constitution as an amendment rather than as an article incorporated in the body of the document reflects the statist's concrete grasp of the realities of power. These realities, happily, were also understood by some of the more clear-sighted and democratic representatives of an armed people, who insisted that the right to arms be included in a Constitution already being foisted upon the citizenry by devious means. It reflects as well the political tensions of the time between those who would preserve and expand the freedoms gained by the revolution, and those who would roll back the astonishing political power embodied in the town meeting and an armed, revolutionary citizenry by instituting a centralized authority in the form of a wrongly named "federal" government. This tension in fact pervades the entire Constitution and Bill of Rights, created behind closed doors (and without a mandate from the people) to replace the earlier, more radical Articles of Confederation.

To understand the thought and politics existent at the grassroots during the American Revolution, we must turn not to the federal Constitution, which at best represents a compromise between statists and revolutionaries, but to the early state constitutions. Several of these, Vermont's in particular, far surpass the federal Constitution in both radicality and far-sightedness. "Article 16th" of the Vermont constitution, for example, expressly forbids the creation of a standing army as a direct threat to democratic freedoms and wisely entrusts their defense to an armed, voluntary citizens' militia.

The politics of social ecology is imbued with a similar belief: "Power that is not retained by the people is power that is given over to the state. Conversely, whatever power the people gain is power that must be taken away from the state. There can be no institutional vacuum where power exists: it is either invested in the people or it is invested in the state." There is no "sharing" of power, except perhaps in certain transitional movements in history such as the American Revolution, and even then thoughtful people will recognize that this condition of "shared" power is only temporary and, in Bookchin's words, "extremely precarious." Sooner or later, the control of society will shift toward the people and their communities at its base or toward the "professional practitioners" of power at its summit.⁽⁸⁾

For the Green principle of participatory democracy (a principle carried into Green politics from its roots in the American New Left of the 1960s) to have any real meaning, the Greens will have to become a consciously anti-statist movement. They must be prepared from the beginning to understand that Green principles will not be instituted, nor an ecological society created, without an eventual, quite probably prolonged, confrontation with reaction and the armed force of the state. The outcome of this confrontation will be determined one way or another, in favor of the social movement and a participatory democracy, or in favor of reaction and the continued domination of society by the elites of capital and the state.

If this understanding, with all its implications, is to take root in the Green movement, an understanding of both freedom and political power more sophisticated than that currently evinced by the Greens and other "new social movements" will have to find fertile ground among activist Greens. Power, whether democratic power or state power, must be understood concretely. Power must, in Bookchin's words, be "conceived as real, indeed solid and tangible, not only as spiritual and psychological." Power is a "muscular fact of life" that plays a crucial role in the determining of society's destiny; it is not an ethereal mood or feeling, much less a mere state of mind, as some of the more prominent "shamans" plaguing the ecology movement would have it.

Power is a "solid and tangible fact to be reckoned with militarily, notably in the ubiquitous truth that the power of the state *or the people* eventually reposes in force. Whether or not the state has power depends upon whether or not the state exercises a monopoly of violence." In precisely the same way, whether or not the people have power depends upon whether or not the citizenry is armed and organizes its own democratic militia. This "muscular fact of life" was fully understood by the armed yeomanry of New England who became the principal actors in the American Revolution, even if it has largely been mystified or forgotten by the people of our own time, within and without the grassroots movements.

Let us understand finally in this regard that the project of creating a free and ecological society will remain a precarious project indeed if the social movement is not prepared to replace the state's political and professional military with a genuine citizens' militia—a voluntary, armed political force with elected officers

subject to recall, and composed of rotating patrols for police purposes and well-organized military contingents for dealing with external dangers to freedom. If, as Bookchin says, "the tragic history of the state's ascendancy is the story of armed professionals who commandeered power from unarmed peoples," the history of a revitalized struggle for self-governance will be the story of armed peoples reclaiming that usurped power and the concrete ability to freely determine their own destinies.

Strategic Nonviolence

Does this mean that social ecologists are calling for violence and armed struggle? Far from it. If social ecology is above all a philosophy of human freedom, it is also a philosophy of politics, indeed, of politics conceived in the most expansive sense of the word: the creation of a full-blown, face-to-face democracy in which politics and democracy would become not only means of decision making but highly celebrated ends in themselves. These ends, best named self-governance, are conceived as a sensuous, visceral, I would even say erotic experience of freedom in the everyday lives of the citizenry at large.

Indeed, as I have maintained elsewhere, the principles of Green politics, carried to their conclusion, imply the creation of a society that would look very much like what Bookchin called "post-scarcity anarchism" in his late-sixties essay of the same name.⁽⁹⁾ Without this direct experience of freedom in the lives of "ordinary" people as its concrete goal, the ideas embodied in Green politics rapidly dissolve into a misty cloud of what Chiah Heller has called, with ample justification, "eco-la-la."

A direct democracy and participatory political culture such as those envisioned by Bookchin in the literature of social ecology, and by the German Greens in their Federal Program, cannot be created through armed force. People cannot be forced into freedom; nor can an ecological consciousness be created through the barrel of a gun.

The kinds of social change envisioned by the Green movement at its best require a "genuinely democratic movement with a strong base of solidarity among its members united against life-threatening competition, and a hierarchical and performance-dominated way of thinking. These social and economic changes can only be accomplished using democratic means and

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Ideological Conflict in the German Greens

Introductory Note: In June 1988, several leaders of the Realo wing of the West German Greens issued a manifesto for Realo politics. (Realos are Greens who support a coalition government with the German Social Democratic Party.) The title, *To Be or Not To Be*—a conscious reference to Hamlet's soliloquy—reflects their conviction that the Green party must either "be" as they prescribe or else "not be," that is, exist at all. And what they prescribe to avoid such "suicide" is a thoroughgoing transformation of the Green party itself, both ideologically and structurally.

The manifesto argues that since their emergence in the early 1980s, the Greens have developed from "a coalition of small groups to a party, from a protest movement to a force for ecological reform and to a powerful factor in parliaments." This development into a parliamentary force for change was "pragmatically necessary." The manifesto urges Greens to remake the Green party in accordance with this "necessary" step, which, they complain, it has failed to do.

The manifesto blames the Left (formerly known as the Fundis) for the present crisis in the party precisely because it has blocked this remaking. The Realos contrast the earlier, vital accomplishments of the party—especially its ability to popularize Green ideas in the minds of the electorate—with its present paralysis. The party is at a "programmatical standstill and is regressing; boredom and dogmatism, organizational chaos—these are the essential causes of the existential crisis of the Greens."

The ideology of the present party is said to have become "theoretically ossified" into mere catch-phrases. These catch-phrases include such items as the call for West Germany to withdraw from NATO (which the Realos oppose); the immediate shutdown of nuclear energy plants (no longer politically viable, according to Realo Rezzo Schlauch); and anticapitalism. (The Realo manifesto characterizes the present society as "industrial," not as "capitalist.")

Instead of making these unrealistic, catch-phrase demands, the Realos claim, Greens should accept the existing system as a framework for environmental reform. This approach is necessary because "the ecological threat to industrial society can be turned around only in the framework of the existing system." The manifesto praises the creation of the present West German state in 1945, even though it was imposed by the Allies, because it has "opened a new chapter of German democratic culture."

The Realo manifesto goes on to argue for a reformist ecological politics: "Ecological politics has meant and still means reformism." Indeed, the role of the Green party is to become the voice of ecology in mainstream politics. The manifesto calls for "state measures" to solve environmental problems, including the international recognition of environmental standards by multinational corporations—thus implicitly accepting these corporations' existence.

Moreover, the manifesto argues, the present "combination of a market economy, parliamentary democracy, statism, and private enterprise" is now generally accepted by a large number of people. Presumably, a new "enlightened" middle class has emerged. The manifesto appeals to this middle class, indeed, it declares that "we need to open the Greens . . . to the new middle classes."

Because the system is generally accepted, a reformist ecological politics, the manifesto argues, would have widespread appeal among the "enlightened" middle class. "For such a [reformist] politics we will be able to find widespread agreement in the new middle classes, and above all they will be indispensable for environmental politics." Above all, such an appeal could get votes in elections—apparently the prime concern of the authors.

In particular, the party should appeal to what it calls the "Citoyen 2000"—the middle-class, urban, liberal Yuppie—as the historical subject of Green poli-

...just as the proletariat was the historical subject of
...ist politics. Realo Hubert Kleinert has even ad-
...ced a notion of "ecological capitalism."

In effect, the Realo authors of the manifesto
envision the German Green party as a suitable coalition
partner for the Social Democratic Party (SPD). Realo
leader Joschka Fischer has called for the "FDP-ization"
of the Greens, that is, for a Green party that is small but
can be the deciding bloc of votes in parliamentary
decisions and that can therefore be influential, like the
FDP, the liberal Free Democratic Party in West Ger-
many today. The Greens, he has argued, must become
"a better FDP."

However, complains the manifesto, the present
Green party is obstructing these "historically neces-
sary" changes. Its existing structure blocks the ability
of the Green party to make coalitions. Under the exist-
ing doctrine of separation of office and mandate, Greens
must perpetually rotate. This doctrine must be abol-
ished, for then the structural boundaries among the
various parties in mainstream politics will be weak-
ened, the better to make coalitions.

The manifesto closes with a statement that
explicitly denies the history of the Green party: "The
Greens are an ecological reform party, and as this we
are entitled to transform its politics itself. For this we
were elected, and for this we founded the party."

At the June 1988 "Perspectives" conference in
Bad Godesburg, many Greens greeted the Realo mani-
festo with ridicule and outrage (see *Green Perspectives*
9). Left Greens, eco-socialists, and radical feminists
unequivocally rejected its prescriptions. Even some
Realos (now known as the "Critical Realos") rebelled
against what they regard as the high-handedness of the
authors (Joschka Fischer, Hubert Kleinert, Jo Müller,
and others) in promulgating it.

Two former Green Bundestag deputies from
Hamburg, Thomas Ebermann and Rainer Trampert,
criticized the Realo manifesto in their article "Yuppie
Ho!" (which originally appeared in the German maga-
zine *Konkret* in July 1988). Regarded as the leading
eco-socialist Greens, their response is presented here
for informational purposes. The issues raised in these
excerpts are relevant to problems that exist in Green
movements in English-speaking countries, and we hope
they will provoke discussion.

—The Editors

The Response of the Hamburg Left

"We are at a loss and in despair. By all indications, the

Green Party is being pressed to a decision: Either it
remodels itself pretty quickly along the lines that promi-
nent Realos demand, or it will be weakened and per-
haps even destroyed."

Any reading of the "Manifesto of Green Re-
alpolitik" along lines other than those of the above
summary would be a fantasy. Indeed, the political
practices of the top Realos are proceeding along these
very lines. Their "taboo breaks" in favor of the prevail-
ing ideologies and social conditions follow each other
in quick succession. The Greens should—according to
the Realos—see the state in a positive light. This goes
beyond merely accepting the state monopoly of power,
which was what the debate was about some time ago.
Now they are saying that the Greens should advocate
NATO membership—not simply accept it as a present
inevitability. The Greens should favor the capitalist
economic order—not only concede its present stabil-
ity. And the Greens should elevate those who profit
from social inequality to the privileged clientele of
their politics ("the subject of our democratic ideal").

In addition, they say, the Greens should dis-
avow a series of uncompromising radical demands.
"The imbecilic demand for the immediate shutdown of
nuclear energy plants is no longer viable," says Rezzo
Schlauch. Numberless Realo representatives have
expressed themselves in a similar fashion, not only on
this particular demand.

For this politics, a odiously normal party is
necessary, one that would overcome the inconvenient
constraints imposed by party-congress decisions on
parliamentary fractions (naturally, only on the basis of
conscience!). It would be a party that would see its
"most brilliant" heads permanently in parliament—
naturally, preferably in ministerial offices—and that
would "emancipate" itself from the existing separation
of office and mandate in order to be credibly and
universally led by the strongest hands of the party.

The leading Realos insist on such a party, freed
from its irreconcilable differences with the CDU [Chris-
tian Democratic Union, the conservatives], the FDP,
and the SPD. . . . The message is unambiguous: either
the Greens become as the Realos prescribe, or the
election of the SPD is recommended. Farewell to
pluralism, farewell to diversity. . . . Those times are
past. The manifesto of the Realos thus takes no issue
with the politics of other parties, but rather engages in
an orgy of thrashing the Greens and their present
political profile. A few samples: In the Green party, we

are told, a "regression to authoritarian sects of the left-radicalism of the 1970s" is occurring. The Green party persists in uttering "vituperative radical phrases" in "an infantile radicalism." It is "dogmatic, repulsive, pitiable." It holds "left-radical revival meetings." . . .

The manifesto expresses feelings of disgust toward the one single and true enemy in society—the "fundamentalist sectarian opposition." This hatred is directed specifically against the left, but it also extends to the party majority [at the base], for in spite of everything, it was democratic majorities that elected the [largely leftist] executive committee and that have chosen this nauseating radicalism. The manifesto signals a complete break and readiness for a split.

Veiled only slightly behind this feverish snort-ling lies the social subject on whom the Realos set their sights for their project of constructing a survivable party. Let us examine one sentence in particular from the manifesto a bit more closely. It reads: "The urban, liberal, consumption-happy [*konsumfreundlicher*] Citoyen, who is primarily oriented to his or her personal life projects but who at the same time protests against nuclear energy and ecological insanity and who feels an obligation of solidarity with the marginalized and with the minorities hit by new poverty, is the subject of our democratic ideal."

A particular social being is thus chosen to embody the Green democratic ideal. This being is "urban," for the democracy that the Realos want is for educated people, and one comes upon those elites mainly in the (big) cities—especially during the night-life in Frankfurt! To avoid problems, the Realos will maintain in the course of the debate that urban Citoyens also sometimes live in the country. That way, the rural Realos will not notice exactly what their leaders think of them.

Second, the "subject of the Green democratic ideal" is "liberal" and primarily oriented toward his own "personal life projects." He is therefore a tolerant person and understands much—as long as it does not interfere with his "personal life projects."...

Third, he is "consumption-happy." This phrase tells us what his social position is: for the Citoyen, things are now materially splendid. And in his unending "personal life project" he may make the claim to be able to publicly display what he can afford in his consumption-happy stance. He has experienced or he has heard that there are places where "achievement does not pay"—such as [among people on] fixed incomes in

alternative projects or (according to the ideal) among the Greens. He does not particularly care for that.

Fourth, he is a Citoyen and knows that our state is not a reptile.

Fifth, he opposes nuclear energy and ecological insanity. With this opposition, we do not disagree; with this opposition, he is welcome to work with us—yes, both as an ally for some of our goals and as a voter. But with opposition, he will become neither the subject of our democratic ideals nor the privileged subject for our politics, because:

Sixth, he knows himself to have an "obligation of solidarity with those marginalized and with the minorities hit by the new poverty." The subject of Realo-Green democratic ideals himself is therefore one who has been neither marginalized nor ground into poverty. He feels himself bound in solidarity to those "objects" of the democratic ideal who have been ground into poverty. This means he may regret their "lot," pity them, and perhaps also make a material contribution to them. But there must always be poor and marginalized people, for with his specific characteristics, our Citoyen can flourish only on that foundation of social inequality, class society. The "subjects" of the Realo-Green democratic ideal are thus themselves expressly not the unemployed, or foreigners, or recipients of social welfare. They are not pensioners, nor do they work in factories on conveyor belts or in office buildings on word processors.

That democracy has something to do with the economic self-determination of those who engage in production—of this, there is no hint in the Realo manifesto. That the fate of millions of people is determined by the decisions of only a few owners or controllers of capital, who decree unemployment and who manufacture needs without any democratic intervention by the people who are affected by their decisions, simply does not appear. That the spiritual and physical impoverishment and the spiritual and physical ruin suffered in industrial work are nobody's "personal life project" but are based on economic force is simply screened out. Instead, we read: "free time and self-employment have now become so important that factories and jobs are no longer fully at the center of normal [!] life plans and work plans. Because of this, greater chances for personal fulfillment have been opened for everyone."

Each person now creates his own happiness; given the rich offerings of this society. Those who do not make it have only themselves to blame. That is our

liberal. Citoyen's real view of the exploited in this society—and our Realos have described no one but themselves!

In fact, the Realo acceptance of "ecological capitalism" arises from no political or theoretical effort. The Realos waste no words struggling with the question of how ecological rationality is to be reconciled with an economy that grows only at the price of its own self-destruction. We hear not a word about... the fact that capital flows to where the highest rates of profit can be expected—regardless of the use-value of what is produced.

Ultimately, the Realos want to be recognized as the most up-to-date consultants for industry and finance. "Do you want to tempt entrepreneurs into the Greens?" asks Stern, and Hubert Kleinert [Realo advocate of "ecological capitalism"] responds, "They need [the Greens] because they themselves have an interest in change."...

It doesn't matter—the game [of the system] can be improved. [The Realos] simply go ahead and make any demand at all: for a people-reconciled imperialism, a grassroots-democratic stock exchange, a woman-loving patriarchy, a violence-free state, lustful assembly-line labor, a peace-promoting NATO. With such demands, it is guaranteed that everything will surely stay the way it is.

The ideas of the Realos and those of the Left Greens are mutually exclusive. ... The antagonism is real; it is not contrived, as the group "Fresh Start 88" suggests. (1) The "Fresh Starters" reduce real arguments [between the Realos and the Left] about content and strategy to "the quarrel between the wings." But as a matter of fact, they themselves basically cultivate the conflict because it is only as a result of the conflict that they can justify their own existence. ...

A historical reality is clouded over to weaken the position of the Left in the Greens. Statist ideologues and the Realos suggest that opposition and resistance accomplish nothing, that only playing the game [within the system] brings about reforms. But this hoary argument always serves to weaken [opposition movements'] ability bring about real change. It was not Lassalle's pleading with Bismarck but the fight for a better society that brought about the new social laws in Germany. Other reforms also came about in the same way. When we are told that social conditions today are not conducive for this, we respond that that does not make the opposite true. On the question of how to develop real

political effectiveness, we stand in a closer alliance with the extra-Green Left and against the Realos, who are loyal to the state. ...

The crisis in the Greens reflects a general decline in left-alternative politics, in readiness for conflict. ... The Realos' appeal to the Citoyen parallels the new feeling that one must serve one's own career instead of getting one's feet wet in conflicts. The "turnaround" (2) and the Yuppie zeitgeist have entranced many more people than simply those who actually succeed in making a career. Stress over grades, difficult access to universities and to apprenticeships, and fear that one may later end up with the unemployed have called for accommodation. Whoever makes it through all this wants to enjoy his success to the full and not endanger it further. The Left and the Greens are an unpleasant appeal to bad conscience.

This swing of the "new thought" converges with a sense of resignation on the part of the old activists. Instead of rotting, capitalism has succeeded in making its standards into a measure of development worldwide; this creates resignation among those who once opposed the system. Ideals collapse. A generation surrenders and jumps onto the last car of the moving train. ... Inactive revolutionaries praise recognition of NATO, the modern CDU, and everything that moves toward the Right as sensible: "taboo breaks." Powerlessness is compensated for by recognition of the existing order. ...

This situation is nothing to celebrate. But there are also strong countertendencies that must not be overlooked. How many people rejected and boycotted the "pumping of the people"? (3) How many have been encouraged by the courageous fight of the inhabitants of the Hamburg Hafenstrasse and their friends? (4) Haven't high-school students, who are supposed to be totally adapted to the system, also—surprisingly, to us—massively gone on strike and demonstrated? In spite of the defeat in Rheinhausen, wasn't a struggle nonetheless fought that was more radical than many before among industrial workers? (5) ... All these are important augurs for the renewal of an alternative politics. Although they are not the great wave that raised the Greens to prominence, the Greens must beware of putting themselves out of the game by turning to the Citoyen.

In this situation we have no facile healing method, and we take no joy in the possible flight [from the Greens] of the leading Realos, should the party

withstand their pressures. We can imagine what a loss of blood this would be. We are not interested in victory in death. On the other hand, if the Realos do succeed with their stance of favoring NATO, the state monopoly of violence, and capitalism, and we ourselves therefore have to leave the Greens, this would mean the complete defeat of the Green approach. We doubt that a Green FDP would be successful in elections—that place is already politically occupied. But it would be far worse if the hopes and possibilities for political change with Green participation were to die. The Greens . . . must face the question of whether they will survive as a force for social change or merely as the superfluous enhancement of the existing party landscape.

NOTES

(1) "Fresh Start 88" (*Aufbruch 88*) is the name of the Centralos or Neutralos who emerged in late 1987 and in their own manifesto asserted the middle against the Fundi-Realo confrontation. The

"Fresh Starters" try to synthesize the two tendencies, each as having part of the truth: "The bitter truth that basic changes are urgently necessary, but not possible at this time, splits in two, forming factions." Because of their aura of Christian reconciliation, they have been mocked as "the blessed."

(2) The "turnaround" is a CDU slogan that refers to the shift from thirteen years of SPD rule to CDU rule in the early 1980s.

(3) The 1987 census came to be known as "the pumping of the people" because the questions it asked went far beyond mere counting.

(4) A set of houses on the Hafenstrasse in Hamburg were occupied by Autonomes squatters; the city's many attempts to dislodge them have failed. The struggle has had an inspirational quality; see George Katsiaficas, "Europe's Autonomes," *Zeta* (November 1988), pp. 90-91.

(5) Workers at a steel plant in Reinhausen, in Nordrhein-Westphalia, went on strike to protest its closing, in defiance of the SPD and their own union, beginning in late 1987. The militant strike received tremendous community support.

Translation by Janet Biehl, with the invaluable help of Peter Fuchs.

The Utne Reader: Some Unfinished Business

by Murray Bookchin

Introductory Note: The *Utne Reader* of November/December 1988 contained a "Zeitgeist" piece by Jay Walljasper, managing editor of the magazine, titled "Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology." Walljasper devoted some two printed pages to summing up his views of this debate in the U.S. Greens. After taking a slap at the New Left for "bitter factional fighting," Walljasper fell back on an argument advanced by one Brian Tokar and proceeded to explain the social ecology versus deep ecology debate as a matter of geography more than ideas. Citing Tokar with approval, Walljasper nailed down the major issues as follows: "The social ecology philosophy has its deepest roots in New England, while many deep ecology advocates hail from the Western U.S. Rugged wilderness and an individualistic frontier ethic still abound in the West, while the New England landscape is dotted with small communities in a more pastoral, socialized setting." Clear? So, allowing that both sides "have a great deal in common . . . why the big rift? Some of it stems from the forceful personalities of the figures involved" (i.e., David Foreman and Murray Bookchin).

We find this to be a typical New Age 1980s non-argument. We live in an Era of Therapy, as well as of Reagan reaction, when motives count for more than ideas, style for more than content—and now, with Tokar on the loose, where you *live* counts for more than what you *say*. This forecloses all serious discussion of ideas. We would have to look at maps rather than texts or take our dispute to a therapist, who would try to adjust our "personalities" like a psychic chiropractor.

In answering Walljasper's piece, Murray Bookchin wrote a double-spaced, two-and-a-half-page response. He tried to unscramble this fascinating "residential" interpretation of ecological ideas, which blatantly sidetracks the reader's attention

from issues to geography. Walljasper printed the response in the next issue, as he had promised to do—but nearly half of it was omitted. What was printed in the January/February 1989 *Utne Reader* (in its orgiastic issue on the moral high-mindedness and redeeming virtues of modern corporations) made it seem that Bookchin had exclusively addressed ideological confusion in the U.S. Greens.

In fact, much of the letter addressed the Walljasper-Tokar thesis. We have no doubt that Walljasper is quite sincere in his belief that a large part of the dispute is a matter of residence. But many of us who have known Brian Tokar since his Clamshell Alliance days and his doings in Vermont are likely to have a more jaundiced opinion of both the "residential" thesis and its author's shadowy "politics."

Be that as it may: we wish to clarify the *real* issues raised by Bookchin in his letter, so we are reprinting it here in its entirety. We are weary of a tendency among deep-ecology acolytes to focus on the "motives," character structure, "conspiracies," and "red" pedigree of people who disagree with their homilies. It would be useful to get down to *ideas* rather than style, *content* rather than form, and *views* rather than residence. Readers, of course, can judge the merits of the debate for themselves, but we think it is time to deal with the issues involved, not the personalities or where they live. —*The Editors*

Bookchin's Response to Walljasper

Jay Walljasper's "Zeitgeist" account of the social ecology-deep ecology dispute in the last *Utne Reader* was disappointing, to say the least. There are American Greens who, while vigorously

...ing forms of "eco-capitalism" and "eco-profits," are trying to make believe that they are not in the same movement with Green anarchists and independent socialists, who are advocating eco-collectivism. Other Greens have all but joined the Democratic Party, while the Berkeley-based East Bay Alliance (which Charlene Spretnak helped to found) unabashedly declares in its summer 1988 newsletter that "most of us are Republicans." Many Greens celebrate one or another form of pious supernaturalism, while others are secular naturalists. Some are harsh Malthusians who blame the entire ecological crisis on population growth, and others detest Malthus's approach and blame the crisis on an irrational "grow-or-die" economy. There are antihumanist Greens who are avowed misanthropes and others who are deeply concerned with the human condition in a deteriorating natural world.

I could go on endlessly with such far-reaching ideological differences that have very practical implications. These differences are often "resolved" by turning many Green conferences into choral chants that "We Are All One" or by engaging in back-rubs and "pagan" rituals. This is not "unity in diversity," as Walljasper puts it. It is sheer chaos. Worse: it turns the Green movement into a New Age caricature of the serious alternatives the movement could open to responsible and ecologically oriented people in the U.S.

No one wants to slap any kind of party line on the Greens—least of all social ecologists, who derive their ideas from an anti-authoritarian Left that has nothing in common with monolithic organizations. We are earnestly trying to build an ecologically relevant New Left for the 1980s and 90s—a recently formed Left Green Network—whose functions are educational, not designed to shred the Greens into warring sectarian factions. We are trying to address broad principles that should be of concern not only to Greens but to *all* people who seek radical social change, and who are repelled by the New Age nostrums that abound all over the place. For Walljasper to bias *Ume* readers toward the mystics who adhere to deep ecology's quasi-religious quietism, Malthusianism, and crude primitivism in the name of "regional" differences verges on a dubious attempt to close off *any* debate within the Green movement and reduce basic differences to mere matters of temperament and style.

Green Perspectives, which is one of several newly emerging Left Green periodicals, may be published in Vermont, but its largest single groups of subscribers are Californians. By contrast, some of the harshest New Age opponents of the periodical live in Massachusetts and Maine. Californians and northwesterners have long pioneered in the real-life community and inner-city ecological programs that Greens should be engaged in everywhere. Attitudes toward Third World peoples, working people, the oppressed generally, and the importance of social issues have far less to do with where one lives than whether one is privileged, affluent, and overly self-indulgent. Put quite bluntly: this has much more to do with a *class* mentality than a "regional" one.

Certainly no one expects a "Green group in rural North Carolina" to hold "the exact [!] set of views as one in Madison, Wisconsin," as Walljasper puts it. This is a pure red herring. Eclecticism may be very much in mode these days, but one finally reaches a number of bedrock issues like whether one supports "eco-capitalism" or democratic collectivism, independent politics or Republican politics, supernaturalism or naturalism, Malthusianism or ecological humanism that should be thoroughly ex-

plored, without accusations of "divisiveness" and black humor about "leftists" shooting at each other in a circle. It would be a real tragedy if the Greens did not fulfill their potential to develop an ecologically oriented Left alternative to the mystical nostrums that have made America more superstitious than medieval Europe (according to some accounts) and the Republican circus that passes for politics today. Readers who want to examine this alternative, which Walljasper barely examines in his highly tendentious article, may care to write to *Green Perspectives*, P.O. Box 111, Burlington VT 05402.

Erratum: In *Green Perspectives* 9, "An Interview with Jutta Diefurth," it was stated that the Realos "asked for only a one-year maximum sentence" for marital rape. The debate was actually over a one- or two-year minimum sentence. Thanks to Peter Fuchs for pointing this out.

For information about the Institute for Social Ecology, which conducts a four-week summer program in social ecology at Goddard College, please write:

Institute for Social Ecology
P.O. Box 89
Plainfield, Vermont 05667

A full Left Green literature list is now available. To receive a copy, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Green Program Project.

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